

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

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The Engineer's Bookshelf

By Wilson R. Dumble

WE ARE THE LIVING—*Erskine Caldwell*—The Viking Press (\$2).

AH KING—*W. Somerset Maugham*—Doubleday, Doran and Company (\$2.50).

THE FARM—*Louis Bromfield*—Harper and Brothers (\$2.50).

I AM writing this from my room in the Hotel Cleveland, overlooking Public Square, while the cold, cutting wind off the Lake is sending the few pedestrians to quick shelter. The scene is one of desertion, save the many twinkling lights up Euclid Avenue which still beckon the pleasure seeker to their entertainments. Cleveland, like Columbus, apparently, is being entertained this week solely by the picture houses; there not being a legitimate stage production in town. The same conditions, according to the newspapers, exist in Cincinnati. Is it possible that the sound and the color which have been injected into the movies have degenerated our theatrical entertainment?

Probably that is the very thing that has happened, and, curiously enough, it is perfectly possible. For instance, when one compares the superb movie production of "Dinner at Eight," finely set, magnificently acted, produced and directed, with a road showing of the same piece in the hands of a none too good cast, one understands the situation. It is best, no doubt, to see a lovely production, such as Eddie Cantor's "Roman Scandals" and a score more like it, than to witness a vulgar, cheap exhibit of a tabloid musical show such as some that have played Columbus in the last couple months.

But as I look back through the year I believe we have much for which to be thankful in the entertainment line. For instance, there was "Dinner at Eight." And there were such productions as "Cavalcade," "Little Women," "Berkeley Square," "Another Language," and "Reunion in Vienna," not to mention the musicals. We have discovered the refreshing witticisms of Mae West, the unusual appeal of Katharine Hepburn, and the wholesome work of May Robson. We still can view the genuine qualities of Marie Dressler, thanks to her producers.

But what can be said of the literary contributions of 1933? What discoveries have been made in the field of literature? Unfortunately, we cannot say what book will stand the acid test of time. Some might remark that Hervey Allen's "Anthony Adverse" will be memorable;

but we do not know. We are not sure. Of course it is easy to make predictions, and if I may indulge in that sport, I might say that "Anthony Adverse" will be as lastings as "The Bridge of San Luis Rey." When I come to think about it—and I thought about it last night as I sat with friends in a cafe further out Euclid Avenue with the sounds of a good colored band and the tinkle of ice and tall cold glasses in my ears—there is only one piece of work published in that famous Thornton Wilder year that I do remember. And that is a short story called "Night Club" by Katherine Brush. So, I do not care to make predictions about "Anthony Adverse." I made predictions last year about "The Fountain," that famous best seller by Charles Morgan, and they have gone quickly and quietly to smash.

WE ARE THE LIVING

There are publications, however, that are good—very good. For instance, my attention was directed last week through a review by Professor Walley to Erskine Caldwell's collection of short stories called "We Are the Living." Mr. Caldwell, a young American, came into literary prominence last year with the publication of a novel, "God's Little Acre." Spending his winters in Georgia, and his summers in Maine, he writes, for the most part, about people in these two locales. His splendid sense of quiet humor manifests itself in "Country Full of Swedes," a delicious story of Maine natives, which is probably the best of the group. He smashes into the sordid side of life from time to time, but not as violently nor as vigorously as does Ernest Hemingway. Out of some twenty stories in his new book I liked "Warm River," "The Medicine Man" and "Indian Summer."

AH KING

Another collection of short stories which I read early in December when it was published is "Ah King" by W. Somerset Maugham. To literary folk Mr. Maugham is best known for his "Of Human Bondage" and his "The Moon and Sixpence," while on the legitimate stage his "The Constant Wife" and "The Circle" are in the favored list. Movie audiences will remember his cinema last winter, "Our Betters," which suffered woefully because of censorship in Ohio.

But in "Ah King" one meets a grand collection of men and women, placed in quiet dramatic situations. The stories all deal with Mr. Maugham's travels in the Orient, and of the six in the volume, "Footprints in the Jungle" is the best.

R. L. S.

Friends of mine on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, knowing my love for first editions, sent me for Christmas

a splendid first edition of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Ballads," published in 1890. It was unearthed in an attic in Talbot County, of which Easton, Maryland, is the county seat. The copy has all the earmarks of a presentation gift, for on the fly leaf in the back of the book Mr. Stevenson has written a note to Mr. Edmund Gosse, the famous Shakespearean critic. In view of the fact that this note, no doubt, has never been published before, I feel it worth while to quote it here.

"By the way, my *Ballads* seem to have been damn bad; all the crickets sing so in their crickety papers; and I have no ghost of an idea on the point myself; verse is always to me the unknowable. You might tell me how it strikes the professional bard; not that it really matters, for of course, good or bad, I don't think I shall get into that gallery any more. But I should like to know if you join the chill chorus of the crickets." It is signed "R. L. S. to Edmond Gosse" and dated April, 1891.

THE FARM

During the brief Thanksgiving vacation when I spent several days in Mansfield, I chanced upon a new book store. It is known as The Park Avenue Book Shop, and it deserves the reputation, no doubt, as the most attractive place of its kind in any small city in these parts. The young lady in charge, very well versed in modern publications, spoke so enthusiastically about Louis Bromfield's new novel, "The Farm," that I was persuaded to read it. Mr. Bromfield is a product of Mansfield, having been born there, and there spent the early years of his life. More than once in his novels he has included glimpses of the city and the inhabitants, and Mansfield people for a decade have pointed proudly to their Louis Bromfield. "The Farm" tells the relentless saga of a pioneer family, their trials in settling in Richland County and the gradual growth of a family fortune. The farm itself can still be seen near the corporation line in the northwest section of the city, but Toby's Run, which is referred to in the book, has long since succumbed to the science of the modern drainage system.

Mr. Bromfield is now living with his wife and three children, Anne, Hope and Ellen, to whom "The Farm" is dedicated, at Princeton, N. J., where, it is understood another novel is in preparation. For the last ten or twelve years the Bromfields have made their home in France, and only early last Fall returned to The States.

If any one is interested in so doing, indeed it is worth while to read "The Farm," visit The Park Avenue Book Shop, see the interesting letter which they have received from the author about the writing of the book, and drive out to explore the rolling hills in the vicinity.

The sweet young thing had broken her glasses. She took the remains back to the optometrist. "I have broken my glasses," she said, "do I have to be examined all over again?"

The young optometrist sighed. "No," he answered, "just your eyes."